

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ASMARA 00036 171410Z

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02 OC-06 CCO-00

CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OES-06 FEAE-00 OMB-01

TRSE-00 EB-07 MCT-01 /095 W

-----171457Z 066050 /44

R 171310Z JAN 77

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4318

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0036

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJECT: INSURGENT SABOTEURS DISRUPT ELECTRIC SERVICE IN ASMARA

1. BETWEEN 1930 AND 2000 HOURS ON JAN. 15, A SERIES OF STRONG EXPLOSIONS DESTROYED FOUR EELPA POWER SUBSTATIONS AND A TELEPHONE RELAY STATION IN ASMARA. THE SABOTAGE OPERATION, WHICH KNOCKED OUT 70 PERCENT OF THE CITY'S POWER, WAS QUITE IMPRESSIVE BOTH IN TERMS OF THE COORDINATION AND THE THOROUGHNESS OF THE DESTRUCTION; AND ALSO FOR ITS TRAGIC ANCILLARY CONSEQUENCES.

2. A VISUAL INSPECTION OF THE DAMAGE AT THE BLAST SITES REVEALED THAT THE UNGUARDED BUILDINGS WERE TOTALLY DESTROYED BY THE
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PAGE 02 ASMARA 00036 171410Z

EXPLOSIONS. THE FORCE OF THE EXPLOSIONS CAUSED EXTENSIVE DAMAGE IN SURROUNDING AREAS, AND IN ONE CASE RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF FIVE CHILDREN AND A MAID IN A HOUSE ADJACENT TO ONE SUBSTATION. ALTHOUGH THERE WERE NO OTHER CASUALTIES REPORTED, THE DEATHS OF THESE CHILDREN OF A PROMINENT ASMARA FAMILY, CAUSED GRIEF AND DISTRESS THROUGHOUT THE CITY. THE FUNERAL THE NEXT DAY ATTRACTED AN ASTOUNDING NUMBER OF MOURNERS DEMONSTRATING

NOT ONLY THEIR SYMPATHY FOR THE FAMILY OF THE VICTIMS, BUT ALSO THE CITY'S DESPONDENCY AT THE CONTINUING VIOLENCE.

3. THE DAY FOLLOWING THE INCIDENTS, EELPA CREWS BEGAN REPAIRING THE DAMAGE BY INSTALLING TEMPORARY TRANSFORMERS AND BYPASSING THE SUBSTATIONS. IT IS EXPECTED THAT NORMAL ELECTRIC SERVICE WILL BE RESTORED IN A FEW DAYS.

4. THE EFFECT OF THE SABOTAGE WILL BE TO RENDER ELECTRIC SERVICE LESS EFFECTIVE AND LESS FLEXIBLE THAN IN THE PAST. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE INCIDENTS MAY WELL PROVE MORE PROFOUND. OF THE MANY INCIDENTS OF SABOTAGE CARRIED OUT WITHIN THE CITY, THESE BLASTS ARE BY FAR THE MOST VISIBLE, AND MANY RESIDENTS WERE SEEN GAWKING AT THE DAMAGE THROUGHOUT THE DAY FOLLOWING THE BLASTS.

5. IN APPARENT RETALIATION FOR THE SABOTAGE OFFENSIVE, EPMG SECURITY FORCES REPORTEDLY RANDOMLY SHOT TO DEATH AT LEAST FOUR (OTHER REPORTS CLAIM EIGHT) ERITREANS THE EVENING AFTER THE INCIDENTS. THE VICTIMS WERE SAID TO HAVE BEEN IN A BAR WHEN A CAR PULLED UP AND SPRAYED THE BAR WITH MACHINEGUN FIRE. THERE IS AN INEVITABLE HEIGHTENING OF TENSIONS IN THE CITY, AS THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE AGAIN APPEARS ON THE UPSWING.
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Message Attributes

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Sent Date: 17-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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